Pacific Islands Fishery News

Newsletter of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

Winter 2006

COUNCIL APPROVES CHANGE TO

FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLANS

At its 130th meeting, Dec. 20, 2005, in Honolulu, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council approved a change from species-based to place-based management of offshore fisheries in the U.S. Pacific Islands. Under the change, the four existing fishery management plans (FMPs) for bottomfish, crustaceans, precious corals and coral reef resources in federal waters (generally 3 to 200 miles offshore) of the U.S. Pacific islands will be restructured into four place-based fishery ecosystem plans (FEPs):

- Mariana Archipelago FEP (includes Guam and Northern Mariana Islands);
- Hawaii Archipelago FEP (includes both the main and Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, including Midway Atoll);
- American Samoa Archipelago FEP; and
- Pacific Remote Island Areas FEP (includes the islands and atolls of Baker, Howland, Jarvis, Johnston, Palmyra, Wake and Kingman Reef).

The existing Pelagic FMP for the Western Pacific Region will become a Pacific Pelagic FEP.

This structural change will allow the Council to more easily incorporate ecosystem-based principles into the management of fisheries in the federal waters surrounding the U.S. Pacific islands. No new regulations are being implemented at this time.

The "ecosystem-based" approach to fishery management has been promoted since 1986 by policy makers, fishery management agencies and environmentalists worldwide, including the President's Commission on Ocean Policy, the Pew Ocean Commission, NOAA and the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization among others.

At its meeting the Council adopted the FEP objectives, boundaries, management unit species, advisory group structure, and regional/international coordination and community participation approaches. Council staff is working with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and local resource management agency staff to finalize the FEP documents prior to transmission to the Secretary of Commerce for approval.

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For U.S. Pacific islanders, the ecosystem-based approach is a return to centuries-old traditions of natural resource conservation that involves holistic management of natural resources from the sea to the mountains.

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Council Convenes Second Ecosystem Workshop

A four-day Ecosystem Social Science Workshop involving more than three dozen experts from the United States, Australia and the Pacific islands met Jan. 17-20, 2006, in Honolulu. The workshop was the second in a series of three being conducted to assist the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council as it moves toward implementing ecosystem-based management strategies for offshore fisheries of the U.S. Pacific islands.

The overarching goal of the workshop was to identify the social science components needed to effectively support ecosystem-based approaches to marine resource management. Among the workshop findings were the need to integrate biophysical aspects with socioeconomic and cultural aspects; to consider cultural appropriateness; to include social science research as well as communication and outreach; and to consider the ethics of intellectual property rights, e.g., when dealing with traditional knowledge.

More than three dozen U.S., Australian and Pacific island experts met to identify the social science components needed to effectively suppo ecosystem-based approaches to marine resource management.

The 4-H Summer Fisheries Program with the University of Guam was described at the Ecosystem Social Science Workshop as an example of a community-based initiative to promote traditional fishing practices and conservation of ocean resources.

The first workshop, the Ecosystem Science and Management Planning Workshop, held April 18-22, 2005, tasked 60 natural scientists with identifying the most effective ecosystem-based approaches to marine resource management that can be implemented based on current data and to determine what new data or models will be required to advance ecosystem management in the long term. The scientists also helped to identify key issues pertaining to data, models and ecosystem indicators and provided a series of actions for each of the key issues. For example, they suggested that data will be needed to address the human dimension as well as environmental and ecological issues; models will need to include multiple layers, such as hydrodynamics, biological communities, habitats and fishermen behavior; and local and regional experts will need to develop appropriate ecosystem indicators separately for each geographic area.

The third Ecosystem Workshop, being planned for late 2006, will synthesize the outcomes of the previous workshops to aid in the development of Council policies on ecosystem-based approaches to fisheries management. These policies will provide guidance to the Council as it continues to restructure its species-based fishery management plans into place-based fishery ecosystem plans (FEPs) and continues to incorporate ecosystem-based principles into these FEPs.

Gov. Felix Camcho (center) and six mayors of Guam (to his right and behind left) discussed ecosystem-based approaches to fisheries management with (counter clockwise on his left) Council Executive Director Kitty M. Simonds, Advisory Panel Chair Wadsworth Yee, Council Member Manny Duenas, Council Chair Frank McCoy and Council Habitat Coordinator Jarad Makaiau.

129th Council Meeting on Guam

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council held its 129th Council meeting at Tumon Bay, Guam, Nov. 8-11, 2005.

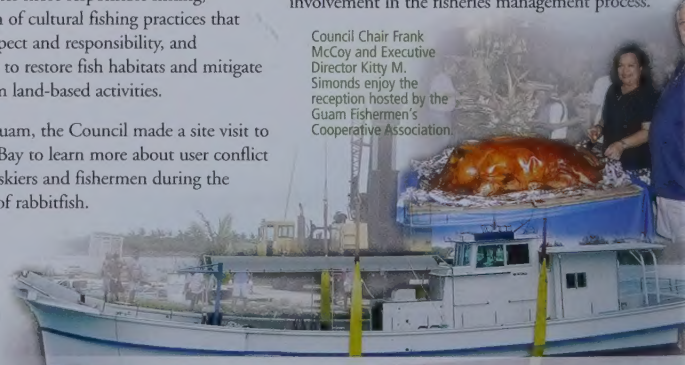
The Council addressed several pelagic fisheries issues, including the expansion of short longline fishing (i.e., use of lines less than 1 nautical mile in length) to catch tuna and monchong in Hawaii and sharks in Guam. The Council directed its staff to investigate these issues and the potential need for an amendment to the Pelagics Fishery Management Plan for the Western Pacific Region to regulate shortline (including handline) fishing in federal waters surrounding the U.S. Pacific islands.

Regarding demersal fisheries, the Council directed its staff to continue to work closely with the communities and governments of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands to locate funding and scientific expertise to support community-based initiatives that have been pursued over the past year as the Council's Mariana Fishery Ecosystem Plan Pilot Project. These initiatives enhance the ecosystem-based approach of fisheries management in the Mariana Archipelago and include better use of fishermen's knowledge to understand local ecological rhythms, education of youth and adults to foster more responsible fishing, revitalization of cultural fishing practices that promote respect and responsibility, and partnerships to restore fish habitats and mitigate impacts from land-based activities.

While on Guam, the Council made a site visit to East Agana Bay to learn more about user conflict between jet skiers and fishermen during the annual run of rabbitfish.

The Council also enjoyed a festive reception at the Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association and participated in the blessing of the 60-foot longline vessel *Galaide I.* The Cooperative had received funding from the Council's Community Demonstration Projects Program to acquire the vessel. The local fishing community spent months preparing the vessel before its launch on Sept. 30, 2005.

Council members and staff were also graciously received by Gov. Felix Camacho and the mayors of Guam to discuss ecosystem-based approaches to fisheries management and community involvement in the fisheries management process.



Council Chair Frank McCoy and Executive Director Kitty M. Simonds enjoy the reception hosted by the Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association.

The *Galaide I*, the only operational domestic longline vessel based on Guam, will be used for a Community Demonstration Project by the Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association to develop the territory's pelagic commercial fishery.

CONTEST RAISES AWARENESS OF ARCHIPELAGO ECOSYSTEM

This entry by Jeffry Ejan of John F. Kennedy School won 1st place for grades 9-12 on Guam.

More than 450 students on Guam and 250 students in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) participated in the Mariana Archipelago Ecosystem Poster Contest. Organized by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, the contest was conducted in October 2005 to help raise public awareness of the Council's move to restructure its existing species-based fishery management plans into place-based archipelagic fishery ecosystem plans (FEPs). Schools took the opportunity to teach students about concepts such as archipelago and ecosystem. On Guam, posters submitted for the competition were displayed at the Chamorro Village.

Judging of the CNMI posters was conducted by Qamar Schuyler, coral outreach specialist, Coastal Resources Management Office; Pete Itibus, Land Investigator and member of the Council's Advisory Panel; Richard Seman, then Secretary of CNMI Dept. of Lands and Natural Resources and a Council member; Lino Olopai, traditional fishermen and alternate member of the Council's Community Demonstration Project Program Advisory Panel; and Mike Tenorio, fishery biologist, CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife. On Guam, judges included Tom Flores, biologist, Guam Division of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources; John Jocson, University of Guam Marine Laboratory; Adrienne Loerzel, Office of the Governor of Guam and Council member; Robert Sajnovsky, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and University of Guam professor of art; Brent Tibbatts, biologist, Guam Division of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources; and Elaina Todd, biologist, Under Water World.

Local businesses and organizations that generously contributed prizes from CNMI included the Chamolinian Cultural Center, Hyatt Regency Saipan, Northern Islands Mayor's Offices, Pacific Islands Club, Pelley Boat Charters, Saipan Ice & Water Company, and Saipan Sea Venture. Contributors from Guam included Atlantis Submarine, Fish Eye Marine Park, Guam Tropical Dive Station, Sam Choy's Restaurant, Tenbata Guam and Under Water World.

Gov. Felix Camacho of Guam presented awards to the first-place winners on Nov. 8, 2005, during the start of 129th Council meeting at Tumon Bay, Guam. Continental Airlines-Micronesia graciously provided discounted fares for the CNMI winners and their chaperones to attend the event, and Under Water World gave the visitors guest passes to tour its facilities.

Winners from CNMI (1st through 3rd places) for Grades K-2 were Benikina Ann Aqulto Lizama (Eskelan San Francisco De Borja), Angela Cruz (Grace Christian Academy) and Julian Pellegrino (Whispering Palms School); Grades 3-5: Mark Caacbay (Oleai Elementary School), Rita Grace Maya Duenas Delavellano (Oleai Elementary School) and Yoneil P. Maniacop (Oleai Elementary School); Grades 6-8: SoJung Song (Saipan Community School), Joseph Martin (Saipan Community School) and Love Dela Rosa (Grace Christian Academy); and Grades 9-12: Arwin Piamonte (Marianas High School), Samylyn Atali (Rota High School) and Cheyenne Songsong (Rota High School).

Winners from Guam (1st through 3rd places) for Grades K-2 were Kevin Ray Igtanloc (St. Anthony School), Alvin O'Connor (Wettengel Elementary) and Jesse Flores (Wettengel Elementary); Grades 3-5: Jin Ho Choe (Bishop Baumgartner), Noel Carlos (St. Anthony) and Savannah Donnauro (Wettengel Elementary); Grades 6-8: Daeun Choe (Bishop Baumgartner), Susan Hur (Bishop Baumgartner) and Kellen Mae Igtanloc (St. Anthony); and Grades 9-12: Jeffry Ejan (John F. Kennedy), Henry M. Ventura (Simon Sanchez) and Jan Michael Calma (John F. Kennedy).

The winning entries have been publicized in Council publications, and plans are underway to include them in lunar calendars for the Mariana Archipelago.

A similar poster contest will be held in May 2006 for the American Samoa Archipelago and in September 2006 for the Hawaii Archipelago. For more information, contact Sylvia Spalding in Hawaii at +1 808 522-5341 or Sylvia.Spalding@noaa.gov or Fini Aitaoto in America Samoa at 684 633-7639 or Fini.Aitaoto@noaa.gov.

The Marianas Archipelago Ecosystem
The Marianas Archipelago Ecosystem
Archipelagic-based Fishery Ecosystem Plans:
Looking to the Past in Managing the Future

Gov. Felix Camacho of Guam (far right); John San Nicholas of the CNMI Office of Indigenous Affairs and Saipan Fishermen's Association (2nd from right) and Ben Sablan, Council member from CNMI (far left), with 1st place winners of the Mariana Archipelago Ecosystem Poster Contest from CNMI and their chaperones.

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Telephone: +1 808 522-8220
Fax: +1 808 522-8226
Email: info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov
http://www.wpcouncil.org

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International Quotas Set for Pacific Tuna

Both the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), which has jurisdiction of fisheries operating the tropical Pacific east of 150 deg W, and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), which has jurisdiction of fisheries operating to the west of 150 deg W, have recommended caps on bigeye tuna that can be taken by signatory nations' longline fleets. The caps are based on each nation's historical catch in the respective Convention Areas and were issued in response to concerns of overfishing of Pacific bigeye stocks. To further protect both bigeye and yellowfin tuna stocks, recommendations have also been made to limit the purse seine fishery, including a seasonal closure in the IATTC Convention Area and a suite of measures, including caps based on historical catches, in the WCPFC Convention Area. The WCPFC, concerned about the North and South Pacific albacore stocks, have also recommended limits for those fisheries.

Consistent with the recommendations of the IATTC, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on Nov. 15, 2005, published final rules that will close the U.S. longline fishery harvesting bigeye tuna in the tropical Eastern Pacific for 2006 when it lands 150 mt, which is the amount of bigeye tuna caught by the U.S. in the Convention Area in 2001. Also consistent with the IATTC recommendations, the U.S. purse seine fishery in the IATTC Convention Area will be closed from Nov. 20 through Dec. 31, 2006.

The WCPFC, meeting in Pohnpei in Dec. 12-16, 2005, voted to restrict the longline catch of bigeye tuna for each member country in 2006, 2007 and 2008 to the average annual longline bigeye catch for that country during the years 2001-2004 or the year 2004. For countries that caught less than 2,000 tonnes in 2004, the longline bigeye quota would be 2,000 tonnes in each of the next three years. Territories and commonwealths are considered separate "countries" by the WCPFC, e.g., Guam, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands have their individual caps separate from the United States.

For the Western Pacific Region, the total domestic longline catch of bigeye tuna in 2004 was 4,386 mt, of which 4,159 mt was caught by the Hawaii-based longline fishery and the balance by the American Samoa-based fishery. The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council has begun to look at the WCPFC allocations, and Council action may be required to implement them through the Pelagic Fisheries Management Plan for the Western Pacific Region.

For the purse seine fishery, which in the United States is managed by the Department of State and not through the Regional Fishery Management Council process, the WCPFC voted on a suite of measures for both national waters and the high seas.

The WCPFC and IATTC are concerned about overfishing of Pacific bigeye tuna and have recommended restrictions on longline and purse seine fisheries in their respective Convention Areas.

These restrictions address concerns about both bigeye and yellowfin tuna.

The WCPFC expressed concerns that North Pacific albacore may be being subject to overfishing (although the stock is not overfished). Stock assessments suggest the South Pacific albacore stock is in good shape, but this conclusion is at odds with the poor catch rates experienced by longline fisheries. One possible explanation is the stock biomass may be composed largely of juvenile fish, which are unavailable to the deep setting longline fishery but are being caught by surface trollers at higher latitudes.

For North Pacific albacore, the WCPFC voted that the total level of fishing effort in the Convention Area north of the equator be limited to current levels. For South Pacific albacore, the WCPFC resolved that the number of fishing vessels actively fishing for South Pacific albacore in the Convention Area south of 20 deg. S be limited to the number of vessels actively fishing in 2005 or an average for the last five years. Additionally, catches of South Pacific albacore in the Convention Area south of the equator are to be capped at 2005 or the average historical (last five years) level.

On Nov. 17, 2005, the U.S. Senate ratified the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, which established the WCPFC, and also voted to strengthen the IATTC, which was established by a 1949 convention. U.S. fisheries in the Pacific include approximately 175 tuna and swordfish longline vessels based in Hawaii and American Samoa, approximately 400 albacore troll vessels based primarily on the West Coast and 14 tuna purse-seine vessels that offload in American Samoa.

For more information, go to **http://www.iattc.org/PDFFiles2/C-04-09_Tuna_conservation_2004-2006.pdf** and **http://www.wcpfc.org/**.

Tuna auctioned in Honolulu are primarily bigeye tuna caught by the longline fishery.

The WCPFC is concerned about both North and South Pacific stocks of albacore. Pictured is albacore from the southern stock in American Samoa.

Hawaii Longline Fishery for Tuna Does Not Jeopardize Sea Turtles Existence

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) 2005 Biological Opinion (BiOp) (http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/pir/pdf/s7_HI_LL_final_2005.pdf) on the Hawaii-based pelagic longline fishery that deep-sets for tuna has concluded that the continued existence of all sea turtle species, including leatherbacks and olive ridleys, is not jeopardized by the ongoing operations of the deep-set component of the Hawaii-based longline fishery. The BiOp was instigated because of olive ridley turtle interactions that occurred in 2004.

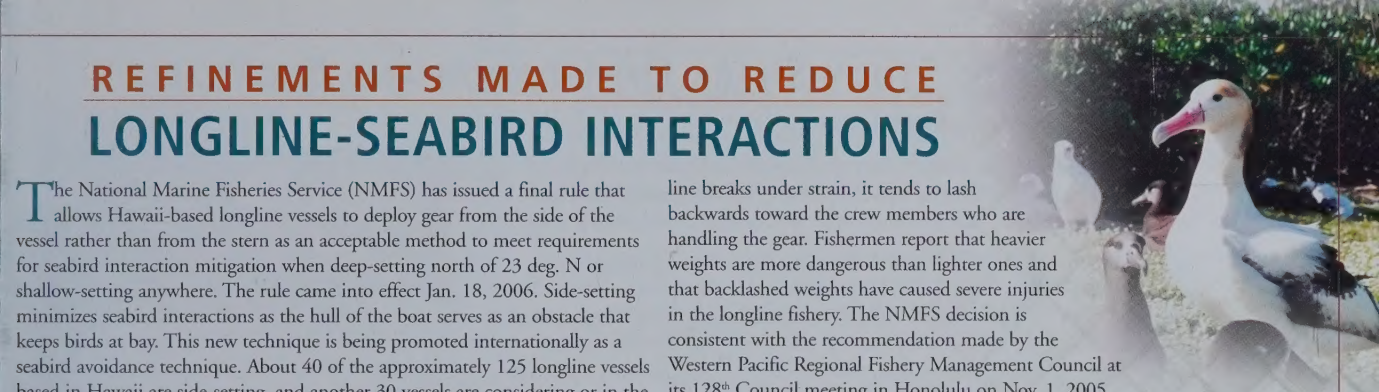
In 2004, the deep-set fishery was estimated to have exceeded the allowable interaction levels for olive ridley turtles as set forth in the Incidental Take Statement of the 2004 BiOp (46 estimated interactions compared to an allowable 37). New information that has become available since completion of the 2004 BiOp is the basis for the non-jeopardy determination. For example, the olive ridley sea turtle populations that nest in the eastern Pacific, the stock that interacts with the Hawaii longline fishery, are increasing at a rate of 12 percent annually. Most recent observer data indicates only one olive ridley interaction with the Hawaii deep-set longline fishery in the first three quarters of 2005.

In 2003, there was one observed leatherback turtle interaction with the Hawaii tuna deep-set longline fishery. In 2004, there were three, all of which were released alive. Long-term data sets show that, overall, there has been more than a 75 percent reduction in takes of leatherback turtles by the Hawaii longline fleet.

REFINEMENTS MADE TO REDUCE LONGLINE-SEABIRD INTERACTIONS

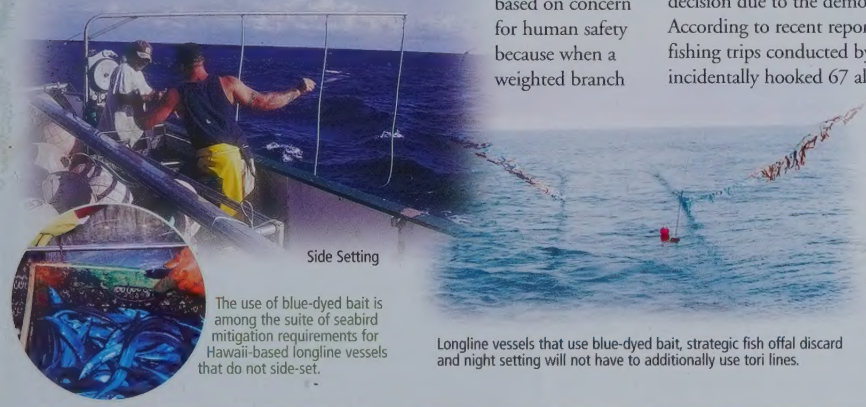
The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has issued a final rule that allows Hawaii-based longline vessels to deploy gear from the side of the vessel rather than from the stern as an acceptable method to meet requirements for seabird interaction mitigation when deep-setting north of 23 deg. N or shallow-setting anywhere. The rule came into effect Jan. 18, 2006. Side-setting minimizes seabird interactions as the hull of the boat serves as an obstacle that keeps birds at bay. This new technique is being promoted internationally as a seabird avoidance technique. About 40 of the approximately 125 longline vessels based in Hawaii are side-setting, and another 30 vessels are considering or in the process of converting to side-setting.

NMFS also announced in its record of decision that the addition of 45-gram weights to each branch line on side-setting vessels would be sufficient mitigation of seabird interaction. The final environmental impact statement on seabird interaction avoidance methods for the fishery had selected a 60-gram weight requirement as the preferred alternative. However, subsequent research showed insignificant differences in the sinking rates of 45- and 60-gram weights. The decision was also based on concern for human safety because when a weighted branch line breaks under strain, it tends to lash backwards toward the crew members who are handling the gear. Fishermen report that heavier weights are more dangerous than lighter ones and that backlashed weights have caused severe injuries in the longline fishery. The NMFS decision is consistent with the recommendation made by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council at its 128th Council meeting in Honolulu on Nov. 1, 2005.



The number of nesting pairs of albatross on Midway Atoll is on the increase. Between 2004 and 2005, Laysan albatross pairs reportedly increased 19 percent while black-footed albatross increased 10 percent., -E. Gilman photo

NMFS also announced its decision regarding Hawaii-based longline vessels that do not side-set but instead adhere to a combination of other seabird mitigation requirements introduced in 2005. These vessels use blue-dyed bait, strategic offal discards, and set at night or use line shooters to sink lines quickly. In 2004, the Council had recommended that bird-scaring lines (i.e., tori lines) also be required on these vessels. However at its 128th Council meeting, the Council changed its decision due to the demonstrated effectiveness of existing requirements. According to recent reports by federal observers who are required to be on all fishing trips conducted by the Hawaii longline fishery for swordfish, the fleet incidentally hooked 67 albatrosses during the first half of 2005. By comparison, between 1994 and 1999, the Hawaii longline fleet incidentally captured approximately 3,000 Laysan and black-footed albatrosses annually. The dramatic reduction in seabird interactions has been largely attributed to those seabird avoidance requirements. The NMFS decision is consistent with the Council's revised recommendation that tori lines should not be additionally required on Hawaii-based longline vessels.

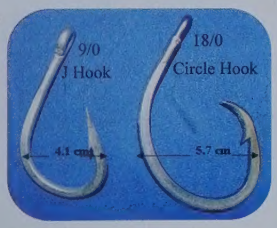


Side Setting

The use of blue-dyed bait is among the suite of seabird mitigation requirements for Hawaii-based longline vessels that do not side-set.

Longline vessels that use blue-dyed bait, strategic fish offal discard and night setting will not have to additionally use tori lines.

NEW RULE INCREASES PROTECTION OF *Sea Turtles*



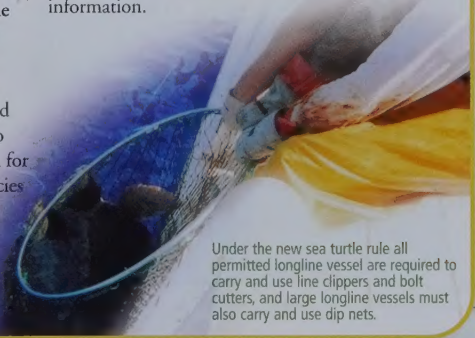
Under the new turtle protection rules, permitted longline vessels shallow-setting north of the Equator must use offset circle hooks size 18/0 or larger and mackerel-type bait.

As of Dec. 15, 2005, operators of all vessels fishing in federal waters (3-200 miles offshore) that target tuna, billfish, mahimahi (dolphinfish), wahoo and other open-ocean species managed by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council must comply with new federal requirements to reduce and mitigate interactions with sea turtles.

Trollers, handliners and operators of non-longline vessels: Must follow specified procedures for handling, resuscitating and releasing turtles that are caught or entangled. Details are available by request from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Pacific Islands Regional Office, 1601 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 1110, Honolulu, HI 96814, phone +1 808 944-2200 or at http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/pir/guides.htm.

Owners and operators of all permitted longline vessels in the Western Pacific Region: 1) Must carry and use line clippers and bolt cutters and abide by prescribed safe handling, resuscitation and release requirements for incidentally hooked or entangled sea turtles. Larger vessels must also carry and use dip nets to bring turtles on board for disentanglement. 2) Must attend protected species workshops annually. Previously, these requirements applied to only to owners and operators of Hawaii-based longline vessels.

In addition, all permitted longline vessels (not just Hawaii-based vessels) in the region that shallow-set north of the Equator must now use offset circle hooks sized 18/0 or larger and only mackerel-type bait. Contact the NMFS office above for more information.



Under the new sea turtle rule all permitted longline vessel are required to carry and use line clippers and bolt cutters, and large longline vessels must also carry and use dip nets.

:: Project to Study Shark Depredation and Bycatch ::

Photos courtesy of the Hawaii longline observer program

The state of knowledge on how to reduce unwanted bycatch and depredation by sharks in pelagic longline fisheries is poor. In some pelagic longline fisheries shark bycatch and depredation pose substantial economic, ecological and social problems.

To address this issue, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council is partnering with Japan's Organization for the Promotion of Responsible Tuna Fisheries (OPRT) and the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Seas Programme based in Kenya to investigate the attitudes of those in the longline industry towards shark bycatch and depredation, identify and disseminate effective and commercially viable methods to reduce shark depredation and bycatch already in practice, and identify promising new concepts for shark voidance and obstacles that must be overcome for their implementation. The next phase of the project will be to test promising, new strategies to reduce unwanted shark interactions. The project does not directly involve identifying ways to increase shark utilization or to achieve long-term sustainable catch of sharks in commercial fisheries.

Information will be gathered through questionnaires and case studies from pelagic longline tuna and swordfish fisheries in Australia, Chile, Fiji, Italy, Japan, Peru, South Africa and the United States. Project partner organizations include Blue Ocean Institute and the New England Aquarium in the United States, BirdLife in South Africa, the National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries in Japan, Pro Delphinus in Peru and the University of Torino in Italy.

For more information, contact Eric Gilman at +1 808 988-1976 or Council Senior Scientist Paul Dalzell at +1 808 522-6042.

Shark-bitten yellowfin tuna.

Shark-bitten bigeye tuna.

Hawaii Ranks 4th in Marine Recreational Fishing

Where in the United States are recreational fishermen catching marine fish? According to a recent report by the Department of Commerce, the fourth largest haul is coming from Hawaii waters. With an estimated 18.3 million lbs caught in 2004, about 7.2 percent of the nation's 254 million lbs of recreational marine fish were reportedly reeled in from Hawaii waters. The report, *Fisheries of the United States 2004*, estimated that approximately 4.2 million individual marine fish were harvested in Hawaii by recreational fishermen, of which 370,000 were released. The other top states for recreational marine fish were Florida 63 million lbs (24.8% of the nation's catch), Louisiana 30.5 million lbs (12%) and North Carolina: 25.4 million lbs (10%).

However, when it comes to lbs of recreational fish caught per capita, Hawaii far outranks every other state in the nation. With a population below 1.3 million, the 2004 lb/capita for Hawaii is 14.5. Coming in a distant second is Louisiana with 6.8, followed by Florida with 3.6, North Carolina with 3.0 and New Jersey with 2.1 lbs recreational fish per capita.

According to the Hawaii Marine Recreational Fishing Survey (HMRFS), fishing is the most popular outdoor activity statewide with an estimated 200,000 participants per year of all ages. This statement is supported by a 2005 survey conducted for the Hawaii Coral Reef Initiative Research Program, which shows that 30 percent of the households in Hawaii fish (www.hawaii.edu/ssri/hcri/rp/ankersmit/2005_qtr_1/01.htm).

The *Fisheries of the United States 2004* estimates were made from data collected through the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistical Survey (MRFSS) and the HMRFS, administered through the State of Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources (HDAR). This two-part survey consists of random telephone interviews combined with field surveys to develop estimates of fishing trips and catches. To view the report, visit the NMFS website at www.st.nmfs.gov/st1/publications.html.

Recreational fishing data used to rank Hawaii as #4 in the nation in catch and #1 in the nation for catch per capita comes from marine recreational surveys conducted by NMFS and the State of Hawaii.

SMART GEAR COMPETITION OFFERS

$25,000

WWF's International Smart Gear Competition rewards innovative ideas to reduce bycatch. The competition, now in its second year, invites entries from all over the world and will award a $25,000 grand prize and two $5,000 prizes. Entries for the 2006 competition are due March 15, 2006. Steve Beverly, a fisherman from Australia, won the first year competition (2005) for his innovative deep-setting strategy to avoid sea turtle interactions, which will be tested by the Hawaii Longline Association in April to judge its effectiveness and wide scale acceptance. Visit www.smartgear.org for official rules, entry form and additional information, or contact Rodrigo Donadi at rodrigo.donadi@wwfus.org or +1 202 778-9757 or Kim Davis at kim.davis@wwfus.org or +1 202 861-8367.

Honolulu Ranks 8th in Commercial Fishery Values

According to the Department of Commerce, the port of Honolulu landed $44.6 million in domestic catches of commercial fish in 2004, making it the 8th highest U.S. port for commercial fishery value. In 2003 it ranked 7th with $41 million in commercial fish landings.

The total domestic commercial landings for 2004 were 9.6 billion pounds, valued at $3.7 billion dollars. Other major ports included New Bedford, Mass., with approximately $207 million; Dutch Harbor-Unalaska, Alaska, with $155 million; Hampton Roads Area, Virginia, with around $101 million; Kodiak, Alaska, with $91 million; Cape May-Wildwood, N.J., with around $68 million; Empire-Venice, Louisiana with about $60 million; and Seward, Alaska, with about $50 million.

Enforcement of MPAs in American Samoa

A landmark case concerning the enforcement of marine protected area (MPA) regulations is pending in the High Court of American Samoa. Two village residents of the eastern part of Tutuila discovered a fishing boat within their village's MPA and immediately towed the boat back to shore. Owners of the boat were apparently fishing (free diving) within the MPA and were from a nearby village. The police were contacted and apprehended them. The outcome of this case will affect local perspectives on the effectiveness of community-based policing versus government enforcement of village-based fisheries projects.

Seafood Workshop *for* Hawaii Teachers

Last year's workshop to bring understanding and appreciation of Hawaii's seafood industry to public, private and non-traditional educators was such a smashing success that the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council is teaming up with the Honolulu Advertiser's Newspaper in Education (NIE) program to offer a second workshop on April 15, 2006. Teachers will experience the fish auction, tour longline and bottomfish vessels, participate in discussions with industry members, learn how to prepare Hawaii's fish from an expert chef and receive a bagful of educational resource materials. Interested Hawaii educators can call NIE Coordinator Jennifer Dang at 525-7660 or Council Media & Education Specialist Sylvia Spalding at 522-5341.

Hawaii educators meet the fishermen and industry folks who put local fish on our table and in our restaurants, plus learn to prepare scrumptious dishes from a renowned chef at a workshop designed just for them.

Illegal Fishing at CNMI's Bird Island Sanctuary

Seven persons were reportedly caught fishing within the Bird Island Marine Sanctuary in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). The Department of Lands and Natural Resources has declared that it would not press charges. According to the *Saipan Tribune*, conservation officers reportedly seized spear guns, snorkels, fins, fish boxes, fishes, lobsters and crabs.

Fishing within the sanctuary is a criminal act that entails a fine of $500 and/or up to one year of imprisonment. The fishermen were acquitted, according to the department, "because the conservation officers lacked conclusive evidence to positively identify any of the fishermen and boat at the time and place of the violation and the fact that the conservation officers had no knowledge of the whereabouts of the boat and the fishermen from the time it left the sanctuary to the time it arrived at Sugar Dock."

Pictured are the fish, lobster and crabs that were reportedly taken illegally from the Bird Island Sanctuary.

Map and image of Bird Island Marine Sanctuary

Illegal Fishing within the Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Office for Law Enforcement (OLE) seized more than 100 lbs of bottomfish from two fishermen who were illegally fishing within the Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary. On Dec. 21, 2005, an OLE agent and conservation enforcement officers from American Samoa's Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources observed the fishing boat, a double-hull catamaran (or alia), anchored in the sanctuary and apparently fishing. The vessel and its two fishermen were escorted to port where a shore-side inspection revealed the fishermen were Tongan nationals. Commercial fishing is prohibited in the sanctuary. A federal investigation is now pending, and the fishermen and the boat owner may face fines of up to $100,000.

In a related matter, NOAA continues to offer a $5,000 reward for any information leading to the arrest of the person or persons who illegally detonated explosive devices within the sanctuary on or about June 14, 2005.

NOAA Conducts 2nd Mariana Archipelago Research Cruise

The NOAA research vessel Oscar Elton Sette conducted the second biennial Marianas Archipelago Reef Assessment and Monitoring Program (MARAMP) in late 2005. MARAMP aims to rapidly evaluate and map the shallow water coral, fish, algae and benthic habitats around most of the islands and offshore banks of the Mariana Archipelago and to collect oceanographic data such as sea temperature and water chemistry. The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) leg of the 2005 cruise took place Sept. 1-30. The Sette then arrived on Guam Oct. 1 prior to embarking on the Guam leg of the cruise, Oct. 3 to 9.

Brent Tibbatts of the Division of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources (DAWR), Val Porter, Coral Reef Monitoring Coordinator assigned to DAWR, and Nick Pioppi, a graduate student from the University of Guam's Marine Laboratory (UOGML) participated in the Guam leg of the research cruise. Dr. Alex Kerr of the UOGML participated in the CNMI leg of the research cruise.

According to Brent Tibbatts, "It was a great opportunity to survey some of the more remote underwater sites around Guam and to work with federal scientists on the cruise. One of the highlights of the cruise was the use of the BOTCAM (Bottom Camera), which is a remote camera that was deployed at 100 fathoms (600 feet) and baited to attract deepwater fauna (animals). This was a rare opportunity to observe these creatures alive in their natural environment."

For more information about the ship, visit www.moc.noaa.gov. For information about the CNMI leg of the cruise, go to www.crm.gov.mp/maramp/.

The Oscar Elton Sette's crew and scientists were welcomed on Guam by representatives from the Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association, Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, National Marine Fisheries Service's Office of Law Enforcement, U.S. Coast Guard, National Weather Service, local government partners and community groups. They enjoyed a fiesta featuring local foods and entertainment.

NEW COUNCIL AND SSC MEMBERS

Dr. Ignacio dela Cruz, the newly appointed Secretary for the Department of Lands and Natural Resources (DLNR), Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), has joined the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council as the designated state official from CNMI. A local veterinarian, dela Cruz was in charge of the department's Animal Health Services prior to his appointment. He holds degrees from the University of California at Davis (BS) and University of Missouri at Columbia (DVM) He replaces Richard Seman on the Council.

Karl Brookins, chief fishery biologist for the American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources, has joined the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Brookins has a PhD in fisheries science from Oregon State University and has been a researcher and instructor at the College of Micronesia in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia; Grays Harbor College in Virginia.; and Oregon State University in Oregon. He replaces Douglas Fenner on the SSC.

Nominations Sought for 1st Annual Richard Shiroma Award

The Council is accepting nominations for the first annual Richard Shiroma Award. This award will be presented to a person for his or her exemplary dedication and performance as a member of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council or one of its advisory groups. The award is in recognition of the service that the late Richard Shiroma dedicated to the Council as the chair of its Recreational Data Task Force and vice chair of its Advisory Panel.

Richard Shiroma

Please address nominations to the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, 1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96816 USA; fax +1 808 522-8226; or email info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov. Please include your name and contact information, the name of the person being nominated, his or her contact information, and an explanation of the outstanding service this person has performed on behalf of the Council. Nominations must be postmarked, emailed or faxed by Sept. 15, 2006.

131ST COUNCIL MEETING

TO FOCUS ON HAWAII BOTTOMFISH AND NWHI FISHING

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council will hold several public hearings in Hawaii in March to address bottomfish overfishing in Hawaii and fishing regulations for the proposed Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) sanctuary. Discussion on these matters as well as other management issues for fisheries in federal waters surrounding the U.S. Pacific Islands will also conducted in March during an Advisory Panel meeting, a Fishers Forum and the 131st Council Meeting. The Council is expected to make a final decision on these issues at the 131st Council Meeting.

HAWAII BOTTOMFISH OVERFISHING

On the basis of fishery information analyzed by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC), the NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO) has determined that overfishing of the bottomfish species complex is occurring within the Hawaii Archipelago. The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that the Council take action to amend the Bottomfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to end bottomfish overfishing within one year following NMFS' notification of the bottomfish overfishing, which occurred on May 27, 2005. The Council has been preparing an amendment to the Bottomfish FMP, as well as a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) that contain management measures to address the overfishing of Hawaii's bottomfish stocks. These management measures target a 15 percent or greater reduction in bottomfish fishing mortality in the main Hawaiian Islands, which has been determined to be the appropriate level of reduction to end overfishing. The alternatives considered include: 1) No Action; 2a) Closure of Federal waters around Penguin and Middle Banks; 2b) Closure of 15 large areas across the main Hawaiian Islands; 3) Annual seasonal closure from May to August; 4a) Total annual quota; 4b) Individual fishing quotas; 5a) Annual seasonal closure from May to September except for a limited number of fishermen who fish under individual fishing quotas; and 5b)Annual seasonal closure from June to August and a partial closure of the southwestern quarter of Penguin Bank.

NORTHWESTERN HAWAIIAN ISLANDS FISHING REGULATIONS

On Jan. 18, 2006, the Council was informed by the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, that NOAA is developing alternatives in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed NWHI National Marine Sanctuary that would enable the Council to continue to recommend fishing management measures under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). The Council was also informed that if, by May 1, 2006, it transmits for Secretarial review appropriate amendments to its FMPs with corresponding proposed regulations, NOAA may review those MSA regulations as potential mechanisms to implement NOAA's preferred alternative for the proposed sanctuary, rather than implementing the alternative via the National Marine Sanctuaries Act.

PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULE

March 2 (Th), 6 to 9 p.m., Maui Beach Hotel, 170 Kaahumanu Ave., Kahului, Maui

March 3 (F), 6 to 9 p.m., Helene Social Hall, Hana Bay Rd., Hana, Maui

March 6 (M), 6 to 9 p.m., University of Hawaii, Hilo Campus Center, 200 W. Kawili St., Hilo, Big Island

March 7 (T), 6 to 9 p.m., Naalehu Elementary School, 95545 Mamalahoa Hwy, Naalehu, Big Island

March 8 (W), 6 to 9 p.m., Kohala High School, 54-3611 Akoni Pule Hwy, Kapaau, Big Island

March 9 (Th), 6 to 9 p.m., Mitchell Pauole Center Conference Room, 90 Ainoa St., Kaunakakai, Molokai

March 10 (F), 6 to 9 p.m., Kapaa High School, 4695 Mailihuna Rd., Kapaa, Kauai

ADVISORY PANEL MEETING

March 13 (M), 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and March 14 (T), 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., Ala Moana Hotel, 410 Atkinson Drive, Honolulu, Oahu

FISHERS FORUMS

(Ala Moana Hotel, 410 Atkinson Drive, Honolulu, Oahu)

March 14 (T), 6 to 9 p.m. (includes public hearing) on NWHI, Bottomfish Fishing and Ecosystem-based Management of Fisheries in the Hawaii Archipelago

March 15 (W), 6 to 9 p.m., on Mandatory Automatic Identification System for Vessels >65 feet

131st COUNCIL MEETING

(Ala Moana Hotel, 410 Atkinson Drive, Honolulu, Oahu)

March 13 (M), 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Standing Committees

March 14 (T), 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Agency and Island Reports, Fishery Rights of Indigenous People, Communities Program, Black Coral Management

March 15 (W), 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (includes public hearing), Bottomfish Fisheries

March 16 (Th), 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. (includes public hearing), Pelagic/International Fisheries, Protected Species Issues, Ecosystem and Habitat (including proposed NWHI Sanctuary Fishing Regulations, National Marine Sanctuary Program-Council regulation protocol, NMFS Essential Fish Habitat Update, Ecosystem Social Science Workshop report, shark viewing update), Program Planning and Administrative Matters

SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Kitty M. Simonds, (808) 522-8220 (voice) or (808) 522-8226 (fax), at least five days prior to the meeting date.

Research Database Launch Set for 2006, Year of the Sea Turtle

Sea turtles are an important part of many Pacific island cultures, featured in legends and traditionally used for food and other purposes. Due to excessive harvesting, habitat degradation, fisheries interactions and other factors, sea turtle populations have declined drastically and many stocks are considered endangered throughout their range. To bring awareness to the plight of these marine species and increase capacity for conservation and research, 2006 had been declared the Year of the Sea Turtle (YOST). The 2006 YOST will build off the momentum generated by the first campaign in 1995.

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and a consortium of international partners are proactive in sea turtle conservation and management. However, a critical step in understanding the population status and trends of Pacific sea turtles is implementing a region-wide sea turtle database. In 2002, based on recommendations from participants that attended the Western Pacific Sea Turtle Cooperative Research and Management Workshop, the Council began coordinating and supporting the development of a Pacific Turtle Research Database System (TREDS). As part of the March 1st launch of the Year of the Sea Turtle, the Council is redesigning and expanding its protected species website, is producing a sea turtle poster and aims to finalize TREDS for its expected launch by early summer 2006.

TREDS rehabilitates the South Pacific Regional Environmental Program's (SPREP) outdated database and will consolidate the wealth of tagging and research information being collected by numerous programs throughout the Pacific region. TREDS is modeled after the turtle database utilized by the Queensland Parks Authority and reflects over 30 years of experience by Colin Limpus, PhD. It was developed by a steering committee comprised of members from SPREP, the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Queensland Parks and the NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center. Peter Williams and colleagues at SPC provided technical support and built the database in collaboration with Limpus and the steering committee. TREDS uses Microsoft® ACCESS, a widely used database system that is accessible to most of the countries and territories in the region.

TREDS can store information on tags (flipper, PIT and satellite), nesting beach and foraging ground monitoring data, clutch and hatchling information, and biological samplings, such as genetics data. It can systematically inventory tags used per project and generate project-specific and/or site-specific summary reports. TREDS will further help standardize data collection by prompting the user to enter essential fields and providing notification of any essential fields left empty.

The overarching, or central, database for the Pacific Island region will be housed at SPREP and a second central database is planned to be managed by SEAFDEC in Malaysia. Together these agencies will manage and consolidate turtle research data for all 31 member countries of the Pacific Ocean (SPREP has 21 member countries and SEAFDEC has 10). Once the database and its manual are completed, the Council and SPREP in collaboration with numerous agencies of the Pacific will distribute it and conduct training on its use. TREDS will be free to turtle researchers in the Pacific Island and Southeast Asian regions.

TREDS will consolidate the wealth of tagging and research information and data being collected by numerous programs throughout the Pacific. Pictured is a leatherback sea turtle being measured in Papua New Guinea.

The TEDS database steering committee is comprised of six partners.

COUNCIL CALENDAR 2006

MARCH

1 Year of the Sea Turtle begins

1-2 91st Scientific & Statistical Committee Meeting
Council office, Honolulu

8-10 NOAA Protected Species Stock Assessment Improvement Plan - Tier III Workshop
Silver Springs, Maryland

11-14 4th Indian Ocean - South East Asian (IOSEA) Marine Turtle Meeting
Muscat, Oman

13 Federal Data Coordinating Committee Meeting
Ala Moana Hotel, Honolulu

13-14 Advisory Panel Meeting
Ala Moana Hotel, Honolulu

13-16 131st Council Meeting
Ala Moana Hotel, Honolulu

14-15 Fishers Forums
Ala Moana Hotel, Honolulu

22-24 8th Pacific Rim Fisheries Conference
Hanoi, Vietnam

28-30 State Directors & Recreational Fishing Community Meeting
Washington, DC

30 Hawaii Bottomfish Fishery presentation
Hanauma Bay, Oahu, Hawaii

APRIL

3-8 26th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation
Crete, Greece

4-7 Precious Coral Plan Team Meeting
Council office, Honolulu

6-9 National Science Teachers Association Annual Conference
Anaheim, Calif.

11-13 Coral Reef Ecosystem Plan Team Meeting
Council office, Honolulu

15 Hawaii Seafood Industry Workshop for Teachers
Honolulu

18-19 Black Coral Workshop
Council office, Honolulu

19-21 North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES)/ Global Ocean Ecosystems Dynamics (GLOBEC) Symposium on Science and Ecosystem Impacts
Honolulu

22 Hawaii Science Teachers Association Spring Conference
Honolulu

25-27 Bottomfish Plan Team Meeting
Council office, Honolulu

MAY

2-4 Pelagic Plan Team Meeting
Council office, Honolulu

4-5 US Coral Reef Task Force Meeting
Washington, DC

23-26 Council Chairs & Executive Directors Annual Meeting
Philadelphia, Penn.

30-31 92nd Scientific & Statistical Committee Meeting
Council office, Honolulu

JUNE

1 92nd Scientific & Statistical Committee Meeting
Council office, Honolulu

7 NOAA Fish Fry
Washington, DC

12-15 132nd Council meeting
Pago Pago, American Samoa

24-28 20th Society for Conservation Biology & 9th Society for Conservation GIS (Geographic Information Systems) Integrated Conference
San Jose, Calif.

26-30 74th Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) Meeting
Busan, Korea

Recipe FURIKAKE CRUSTED OPAKAPAKA ON UDON NOODLES *with* SWEET LOBSTER GARLIC BUTTER

Serves 6 people
2 lbs opakapaka fillets, fresh
Cooking oil
1/4 cup furikake
3 lbs udon noodles, cooked
1/2 lb spinach, fresh
Sweet Lobster Garlic Butter
1/4 lb parmesan cheese, shredded

Coat opakapaka with furikake. Sear and set aside. Add udon noodles and spinach to Sweet Lobster Garlic Butter. Plate noodles. Garnish with parmesan cheese. Top with seared opakapaka

SWEET LOBSTER GARLIC BUTTER

3 lbs lobster bodies, excluding tail and claws (or use shrimp shells)
1 onion, large
4 oz carrots
4 oz celery
2 garlic bulbs, cut in half
1/4 cup tomato paste
1 bay leaf
2 tsp thyme
1 tbsp black peppercorns, whole
1/8 cup garlic clovers, thinly sliced
1/2 lb unsalted butter
Salt and pepper

Roast lobster bodies in oven at 450° for 10 minutes. Place in stock pot with coarsely chopped onion, carrots and celery; garlic bulbs; tomato paste; bay leaf; thyme and peppercorns. Fill with water to cover lobster bodies. Simmer 1 hour. Strain. Reduce stock (1 quart) to 2 cups. Sauté sliced garlic. Add lobster stock reduction. Add butter, and whisk in seasonings.

courtesy of D. K. Kodama, chef and owner, Sansei Seafood Restaurant & Sushi Bar